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SYNOPSIS OF SERMONS

Preached by the Pastors of the Different Churches in Marshall on Sunday Morning, December 22nd.

THE WORD DWELLING AMONG US.

John 1:14: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us."

Here we have one of the most prominent subjects of the gospel, one of the cardinal, fundamental doctrines of Christianity, namely, the Incarnation. The coming of Christ in the flesh marks the turning point in the history of the world. Before His advent ancient history was but a preparation for Him as the fulfillment of all types, of all prophecies, of all the nobler aspirations of men, and of the desire of all nations. Since His coming all history has been, and is, and shall be but subservient to the spread and triumph of Christianity.

In the text we have Christ presented to us:

1. As the Word. Two of the evangelists give us the human ancestry of Jesus: Matthew His legal descent through His reputed father, Joseph, and Luke His actual descent through His mother, Mary; but John says nothing of His family descent, nothing even of His nationality. He begins with the eternity of Jesus. "In the beginning was the Word." Eternity carries with it the idea of self-existence. No creature is self-existent. Only the Creator is. Hence the divinity of Jesus. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that hath been made."

2. As Incarnate. "And the Word became flesh." The Platonists and Jewish philosophers, especially Philo, used the term "word" to signify the Creator of the world. But Jesus is more than Creator. He is also the Revealer of God to men. Upon the pediment of one of the most famous temples of ancient Egypt these words are sculptured: "I am that which has been, which is, and which is to be; and my veil hath no mortal yet drawn aside." Homer said "that Athena took the cloud from the eyes of Diomedes that he might recognize gods and men." Jesus has drawn aside the veil that concealed divinity and lifted the cloud from the eyes of men that they may know God. He is the refutation of agnosticism. Words are thoughts materialized; thoughts made audible and visible. Jesus was "God manifested in the flesh." Words are the "expression of hidden thought." They are more. They are the expression of one's true self. So Jesus was the expression and interpretation of the living God. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him"—that is, interpreted Him, made exegesis of Him. "No man knoweth the Son but the Father; and no man knoweth the Father but the Son, and He to whomsoever the Son shall reveal him."

3. As dwelling among us. "And dwelt

among us." The word "dwelt" is peculiar to John. It is found nowhere else in the Bible than in his gospel and in the book of Revelation. It means, literally "to dwell in a tent," or "to tabernacle." There is much suggested by the word.

1. Christ was among us not *incognito*, but in His real self, in His true character. There is no place where a man is more really himself than in the place he dwells. In society and in business a man is more or less in reserve; indeed, he may wear some other self than his real self. But at home man is never more himself than with his wife, his children, and his domestics. Here he is at his best or at his worst. If you would know Jesus in His real self and true character, study Him as He "dwelt among us."

2. Christ was thoroughly identified with men. There is an identity existing between those who dwell together that there is not between those who live apart. There is, first, the identity in law. Subjects of the same government are under the same laws, whether these be the laws of a home, a city, or a state. Jesus was born of a woman, and therefore under the same physical, mental and moral law that other men born of women are under. There is, secondly, the identity of interest. Jesus is interested in everything that pertains to the welfare of men and the world. He dwelt among us.

3. It was a wonderful condescension on the part of Jesus to dwell among us. He had a glory with the Father before the world was. He was rich. He was in the "form of God." But He "emptied Himself" to dwell among us. He became poor. So poor that He had not where to lay His head. He took upon Himself the "form of a servant." He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. He served even unto death, yea, the death of the cross.

4. As the "Captain of our salvation" Jesus took the field in person and led the forces of the good against the powers of evil. In the conquest of Grenada, Ferdinand and Isabella, sovereigns of Spain, went on the battlefield in person to conduct the war of Christendom against the Moors. Likewise Jesus put Himself on a level with men in the conflict with evil. He faced every foe that men had to face. He endured every hardship that they have to endure. He was tempted in all points like as they are, yet without sin. He triumphed over all evil. By His example He has taught men how to endure and to triumph. Follow Him, and like Him, "thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the serpent shalt thou trample under feet."

5. Christ is none other than Immanuel, "which is, being interpreted, God with us." "And tabernacled with us." This is the marginal reading of the Revised Version. There is evident reference to the wilderness tabernacle in which the Divine Presence abode until the temple of Solomon was reared. And will God indeed dwell with men? The heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him. Still He tabernacled with us, for in

Jesus "dwelleth all the fulness of Godhead bodily." He was "the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of His substance." He that hath seen Jesus hath seen the Father. He dwelt with us that we might dwell with Him forever. "In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also."

E. E. MORRIS.

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

"She brought forth her first born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them at the inn.—Luke, 11:7.

By way of introduction, the pathos of the incident was touched upon. Such a situation taken away from the scriptural setting would stir the pity of all men. But when thought of in its true light—that the Son of God in His humiliation was born of a woman, and came to earth to redeem men, and had to rest on a bed of straw in a stable, surrounded by every evidence of poverty, then it is enough to startle everyone to indignation at the criminal indifference of the world.

Not far from Bethlehem was the magnificent palace of Herod the Great, grouped about it were the houses of his voluptuous courtiers. The Mistress of the world was here represented in dazzling glare and splendor; while the coming Master of the World had to begin with a manger for a throne, and a few rough clad shepherds for his court.

Two kingdoms were by the birth of Christ placed side by side. One had arisen in the clash of arms and the spirit of invasion and conquest, the other was founded upon "Peace on Earth, good will toward men." One has crumbled into the ashes of a smoldering past, and the other has encircled the globe, ascended in power through the gates of heaven, and spread its borders to the cycles of eternity.

The indifference of the world to this kingdom of Christ was then touched upon.

The prophets of old had turned their faces to the oncoming centuries and told of the advent of a King whose reign would never end, whose sway of power would be universal. Wise men had seen the rising of his star, and had followed in its wide reaching rays. And yet in the focal crisis of the hour, when the time had come for which the nations groaned, none were prepared. None were ready to aid in starting the kingdom with that appearance of respectability its very greatness would seem to demand.

Like conditions exist to day. There is no room at the inn. People are taken up with the things of time. At this Christmas season men will reel in drunkenness upon the streets, their lips foul with curses, and the very air reeking with blasphemies of the name of him who brought them with his own shed blood.

Great was the poverty of his beginnings on earth, but here God's wisdom was at work. He links the poverty and suffering of mankind with Christ's. Some one has said, "If he had been born in a palace, and been clothed in purple and fine linen, he wouldn't have appealed to the common place people of earth."